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ACTION EUR-01

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4209

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 035573

DEPT FOR EUR/SOV

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PNAT, US, UR

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH GEORGIAN PRESIDENT

GAMSAKHURDIA: LETTER FOR SECRETARY BAKER

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 35203; (B) MOSCOW 33877; (C) STATE
382175; (D) MOSCOW 28678

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: GEORGIAN PRESIDENT GAMSAKHURDIA
OUTLINED STANDARD GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT POSITIONS ON
LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND THE OSSETIAN CRISIS DURING
DECEMBER 5 AND 6 MEETINGS IN TBILISI. HE CLAIMED THE
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OPPOSITION NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS NOT A LEGAL
ORGANIZATION BUT A BAND OF COMMON CRIMINALS FORCING
HIM TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEM. GAMSAKHURDIA
CLAIMED THAT THE TRIAL OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY
LEADER GEORGIY CHANTURIA HAS BEEN DELAYED BECAUSE
OPPOSITION ELEMENTS THREATENED THE JUDGE, RESULTING
IN HIS ILLNESS AND BRIEF HOSPITALIZATION.

NONETHELESS, HE INDICATED THAT THE TRIAL WOULD BEGIN
IN A REASONABLE TIMEFRAME, EVEN IF A NEW JUDGE HAD TO
BE APPOINTED. GAMSAKHURDIA PRESENTED A LETTER
(SEPTTEL) TO SECRETARY BAKER RESPONDING TO OUR
DEMARCHE WHICH CONTAINED PRESIDENT BUSH'S REPLY TO
GEORGIA'S REQUEST FOR U.S. RECOGNITION (REF B). END
SUMMARY

CORRECTING THE RECORD

**REVIEW AUTHORITY: Frank
Perez, Senior Reviewer**

3. IN DECEMBER 5 AND 6 MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT GAMSAKHURDIA, EMBOFFS ENCOUNTERED A CORDIAL, BUT OBVIOUSLY DISPLEASED GEORGIAN LEADER. GAMSAKHURDIA REFERRED TO THE DEMARCHE WHICH EMBASSY DELIVERED TO HIM VIA GEORGIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE IN MOSCOW NOVEMBER 23 (REF C). HE COMPLAINED THAT THE U.S. NON-PAPER WAS UNSIGNED AND STATED THAT IT SHOWS THE U.S. HAS INCORRECT INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION IN GEORGIA AND OSSETIA. IN RESPONSE TO THIS NEW DEMARCHE (REF B), GAMSAKHURDIA PRESENTED CIRCUIT RIDERS WITH AN UNSIGNED LETTER TO SECRETARY BAKER EXPLAINING HIS VIEWS ON POLITICAL PRISONERS AND OSSETIA. TEXT OF LETTER FOLLOWS BY SEPTTEL.

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4. TO "CORRECT" THE RECORD, GAMSAKHURDIA ALSO PROVIDED HIS ORAL RENDITION OF THE LOCAL SITUATION, CLAIMING THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN GEORGIA, AND ASKING RHETORICALLY WHAT THE U.S. WOULD DO IN THE FACE OF BARRICADES AND AN ARMED OPPOSITION? IN ALL COUNTRIES, HE ARGUED, ARMED OPPOSITION IS ARRESTED AND PUNISHED. GAMSAKHURDIA CLAIMED GEORGIY CHANTURIA'S NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS NOT A PARTY, BUT A "CRIMINAL GANG OF THIEVES AND ROBBERS." HE STATED THAT THE HEAD OF THE OPPOSITION NATIONAL INDEPENDENT PARTY, IRAKLI TSERETELI, BEAT SIX WOMEN, INCLUDING ONE PREGNANT WOMAN, IN THE STREET, AND IS NOW IN HIDING. OTHERS, HE SAID, BEAT PEOPLE WITH STONES IN SEPTEMBER, PUTTING FORTY PEOPLE IN THE HOSPITAL. DESCRIBING THE SHOOTING EVENTS IN OCTOBER (REF D), GAMSAKHURDIA SAID GOVERNMENT FORCES DELIBERATELY FIRED IN THE AIR AND USED BLANKS, WHEREAS THE OPPOSITION SHOT POINT BLANK AND KILLED ONE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD. WHEN NOTIFIED OF EMBOFFS' INTENT TO MEET WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION, GAMSAKHURDIA REPLIED THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPONENTS SUPPORT THE ARMED OPPOSITION AND WORK TOGETHER WITH THEM. HE SAID, "THEY WON'T GIVE YOU THE RIGHT INFORMATION." (NONETHELESS, GAMSAKHURDIA ARRANGED A MEETING FOR EMBOFFS WITH OPPOSITION MEMBERS.) THE PRESIDENT CLAIMED AT ONE POINT THAT THE OPPOSITION IS FINANCED BY THE COMMUNIST MAFIA IN TBILISI AND

OPPOSITION LEADERS TRIAL DELAYED

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5. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE DELAY IN GEORGIY CHANTURIA'S TRIAL, GAMSAKHURDIA RESPONDED THAT THE TRIAL HAD BEEN SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 3, BUT HAD TO BE POSTPONED DUE TO ILLNESS ON THE PART OF THE JUDGE IN THE CASE (REF A). THE REASON THE JUDGE "TOOK" ILL, GAMSAKHURDIA SAID, IS THAT THERE HAD BEEN SERIOUS THREATS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST HIM. (AT ONE POINT, HE SAID THE THREATS WERE TO OCCUPY THE COURTHOUSE BUILDING AND FREE CHANTURIA.) THOSE THREATS, GAMSAKHURDIA CONTINUED, RESULTED IN THE JUDGE UNDERGOING HEART PROBLEMS. THE PRESIDENT CLAIMED ONLY THE JUDGE HIMSELF COULD DECIDE WHEN TO RESCHEDULE THE TRIAL. HE MAINTAINED THAT THE COURT COULD AND WOULD, IF NECESSARY, APPOINT ANOTHER JUDGE TO HEAD THE TRIAL, BUT EXPRESSED FEARS THAT THE OPPOSITION WOULD ALSO HARASS A SECOND APPOINTEE. HE ASSURED CIRCUIT RIDERS, HOWEVER, THAT A NEW JUDGE WOULD BE APPOINTED IF THE PREVIOUS ONE DID NOT RECOVER (HE DID NOT PROVIDE A TIME FRAME), SAYING THERE IS NO LAW TO

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CHANGE VENUE, BUT "WE WILL DO SOMETHING." WHEN INFORMED THAT CIRCUIT RIDERS PLANNED TO MEET WITH CHANTURIA'S WIFE, IRINA SARISHVILI, GAMSAKHURDIA DESCRIBED HER AS MENTALLY UNSTABLE. THE PRESIDENT HELD UP AN "OBJECTIVE" EDITORIAL FROM THE GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER, "THE GEORGIAN INDEPENDENT," WHICH STATES THAT CHANTURIA'S BEHAVIOR RAISES DOUBTS ABOUT HIS MENTAL CONDITION AND SUGGESTS HE IS BEING USED BY THE SOVIETS.

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OSSETIA

6. GAMSAKHURDIA WAS ALSO DISPLEASED WITH THE U.S. POSITION ON OSSETIA. HE ASSERTED THAT THE U.S. NON-PAPER SUGGESTS GEORGIANS ARE KILLING OSSETIANS, WHEREAS THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE. HE CHARACTERIZED U.S. NON-PAPER AS ONE-SIDED AND SEEMINGLY INFLUENCED BY INFORMATION FROM THE SOVIET NEWS AGENCY, TASS. GAMSAKHURDIA CLAIMED THE SOVIETS ARE SPREADING DISINFORMATION TO INHIBIT THE INDEPENDENCE OF COLLINS

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